DYNATRON

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A fanzine of sorts from Roy Tackett, 915 Green Valley Road NW, Albuquerque, N.M. 87107. Roytac is usually out of sorts. Dynatron is sent mostly to FAPA and FLAP these days due, in part, to the cost of postage which, the U.S. Postal Service assures us, is certain to increase again. The other part is that I really can't work up all of the enthusiasm necessary to put out a general circulation fanzine. Somehow it doesn't seem worth the effort. And it doesn't take all that much effort.

A Marinated Publication

only some are more equal than others

We were in the San Francisco Bay area during the latter part of May and took advantage of the opportunity to see *Return of the Jedi* at the Belmont Theater in Belmont. The Belmont is a three screen theater and the picture was showing on all three screens so there was no line to wait in for the early showing.

The picture is showing at a single theater in Albuquerque and there are long lines for each screening and I am not about to spend two hours waiting in line to see a movie.

As with *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Return of the Jedi* was a fun movie. I enjoyed the Douglas Fairbanks/Errol Flynn sea story. The scene from *Trader Horn* was delightful. There were lots of borrowings from lots of other films and the special effects were fine. All of which makes for a fine visual treat if that is all one is after. Remove all that, though, as one does when one reads the three books, and there isn't really much there.

Return of the Jedi apparently marks the end of the STAR WARS saga and maybe that is just as well. True, six more films have been promised but whether they will actually be produced seems somewhat questionable. Interviews would seem to indicate that George Lucas is tired of it all and wants to go on to other things.

For an objective look at STAR WARS one must get out of the darkened movie theater with all those hypnotic effects flashing on the screen and read the three books: *Star Wars* by George Lucas, *The Empire Strikes Back* by Donald F. Glut, and *Return of the Jedi* by James Kahn.

The first book, by Lucas, is the worst of the three. Whatever his talents in the film field may be, Lucas is not a novelist. He was unable to keep track of his characters, his time frame or to decide who was what. Consider, for example, the introduction of Darth Vader in *Star Wars*:

"Two meters tall. Bipedal. Flowing black robes trailing from the figure and a face forever masked by a functional if bizarre black metal breath screen - a Dark Lord of the Sith was an awesome, threatening shape as it strode through the corridors of the rebel ship."

Not hardly the description of a human being. Note Lucas' use of the pronoun "it".

Further on: "Above her towered the threatening bulk of Darth Vader, red eyes glaring behind the hideous breath mask."

Not hardly the description of the all too human father of Luke and Leia.

Ah, well, no need to dwell on it all. It might be worth noting that despite the indications that there had been a number of Emperors, the first one, Palpatine, was also the last one. Amazing.

But then we have learned that consistency is not one of the strong points of movie people. Films are made to dazzle the audience for a couple of hours or so and that audience

is not expected to think about the story - or probably anthing else for that matter. I doubt that 1% of those who have seen the movies have read the books.

Well, I'll admit to being an old fogey reactionary who thinks there ought to be something to a story besides flash and glitter. And I won't complain too much about the shallowness of the STAR WARS saga since it is doing a job that I consider worthwhile: selling that vast audience of non-thinkers the idea that space travel is a good thing. The only way most of the populace can be reached these days is through the visual "media" so c'mon, George, put it in hyperdrive and we'll watch the stars grow into long streaks for six more films.

You betchum.

X

The other movie I saw this summer (yeah, I actually saw two) was *Wargames* which was another flash and dazzle which also contained a MESSAGE. Two messages, actually. One obvious and on the surface and one more or less below the surface.

This one concerns a highschool aged computer whiz who, through improbable circumstances, manages to hook into the NORAD computer at Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, and, since he is a game player, decides to play the game of Global Thermonuclear War with the big guy. Shortly thereafter the kid gets scared (particularly with assorted government agents chasing him around) and tries to call the game off but the big computer insists on playing the game out. The world is on the brink, yea verily, the very brink when our airhead computer whiz manages to get the big computer to run through all of the simulations and whatall and reach the conclusion that the only way to win the game of Global Thermonuclear War is not to make the first move in the first place.

Again fine razzle and flash entertainment with the message beating you about the ears: in the game of Global Thermonuclear War nobody wins so don't start the game.

Underlying message: anti-science and anti-technology. All that stuff is bad so we shouldn't be messing with it.

Blah!

X

I see in the advertisements for the Science Fiction Book Club that Jean Aul's *The Valley of Horses* is being offered as one of their selections. I don't know why it should be other than perhaps fantasies of pre-history are otherwise unclassifiable. Ms Aul's latest strengthens the opinion I formed when I read *The Clan of the Cave Bear*. Sheis a pretty good novelist but weak on paleo-anthropology.

Who is not?

Speculation concerning our remote ancestors is mostly guesswork which seems to be challenged with every new fossil discovery. Or non-fossil discovery even.

The latest evolutionary uproar is caused by the molecular biologists and their studies of DNA. Recent studies reported in the science magazines and a couple of books indicate, for example, that the split between man and apes took place much later than had been previously postulated by the fossil record alone. The human-chimpanzee line may have separated no more than five million years ago which is three to four million years more recent than previous speculation admitted.

According to these reports the DNA of homo sapiens and the chimpanzee is 98+% identical which is as close or closer than say the DNA of two members of the same species of ground squirrel living on opposite sides of the Grand Canyon.

Astounding! If we are that close one wonders if fertile interbreeding is possible? Wouldn't that be a kick in the head?

It is DNA that programs us, though, and that minute difference is enough difference in program to make one species homo sapiens and the other chimpanzee.

Some slight change--mutation--in DNA 4½ or 5 million years ago put us on a different road. Our ancestors chose upright walking instead of remaining quadrupedal. That freed the hands for more efficient tool useage and eventual tool making. Tool making really did not improve a whole hell of a lot for a couple of million years. The basic "handaxe" and a couple of others were it. Mankind's basic intelligence and wisdom did not seem to progress much either until about 50,000 years ago when modern homo sapiens made the scene. Homo saps is a decidedly different breed of ape.

Which brings us back to genes and DNA and programming. It is DNA we are told, which makes us what we are. When we deal with DNA we are down on the molecular level and the smallest change in a molecule can change the program. It doesn't take anything large to mutate the program. A virus is big enough.

Picture a small brand of presapient homo erectus wandering through Asia or Australia. The band doesn't give much thought to anything except the next meal or a place to bed down for the night. It enters a new territory never before visited by mankind. After a few days they start sneezing and generally feeling uncomfortable with the symptoms of something like the common cold. It is just a little virus infection and they get over it.

The virus makes its way through their bodies and eventually settles down in the DNA molecules in the reproductive system where it causes a few changes and the strangest children begin being born. The next generation is Homo Sapiens.

Think of that. Homo Sapiens with all his vaunted intelligence and wisdom is simply a disease!

X

Shaddup! I've been doing this zine for over 20 years. You ought, by now, to be on the lookout for shaggy dog stories.

X

This could, in a way, be considered the 23rd Annish of Dynatron. The first issue was dated September 1960 and as this will be distributed in August it is as close as I'm going to get to the actual anniversary date.

X

Still with DNA and it brings us to Frank Herbert's *The White Plague* which may be the best thing he has written since *Dune*.

This is the story of an Irish-American medico whose specialty is recombinant DNA and whose wife and child are killed in an IRA bombing in Dublin. The medico takes revenge. Oi! Does he take revenge. (No, Juffus, it does not require an interrogatory as it is a statement.) Our, uh, hero, so to speak, creates a disease which is 100% fatal to women and turns it loose in Ireland, England and Libya (because the IRA terrorists are trained in Libya.)

But, of course, it cannot be contained and the results are disasterous for the entire world.

Herbert has written a hell of a good book in *The White Plague* with a lot to say about madness, terrorism, and the general sickness of the Irish character.

Recommended with reservations because, once again, there is a strong thread of anti-science in this one. Herbert should know better but, perhaps, he is trying to sound a warning.

X

If you get the impression that I am beating a drum against stories that are anti-science or anti=technology in their content...you're right.

The television movie, *V*, was terrible but it did show that scientists are an easy target these days because the media has paved the way by its constant harping on the dangers of unrestricted scientific experimentation.

It was as near as the 1920s and 1930s that a vast segment of the general public still equated science with black magick and I am not all that sure that things have changed a whole hell of a lot in the past 40 or 50 years.

The search for knowledge has always been a dangerous path to walk and the shamans are still out there denying that the facts are true and demanding that we be burnt as witches.

You will pardon me, I hope, but I do have this unfortunate tendency to climb on a soapbox. A weakness in my character and a hole in my facade of cynicism. It oftimes manifests itself in fanzine writing and I should know better. Not that it really matters for I doubt that many of today's fans read Dynatron anyway. It ain't got no pictures, man.

Essentially I write for myself which is what we are all doing anyway. If we can provoke a little response so much the better. And if we cannot--so it goes.

((Ah Ha! A late report here indicates that the first STAR WARS book was written by Alan Dean Foster under Lucas's byline.))

I do get a letter of comment once in a great while. Here's one from Jack Speer:

When commenting my way through bygone FAPA mailings, i put aside Tackett fmz with the thought "I'll write a loc to him, so no need to take up space in Synapse". Then sometimes it doesn't happen. To avoid this, i'd better start the loc as i come to that FAPA-zine, and add to it as others flit past.

Why isn't the usual fluctuation that produces an ice age sufficient explanation for extinction of the terrible lizards? ((Hmm. I disrecommember perzactly but a vague memory tells me that there was no ice age at the time of dinosaur extinction. Do you really want to put me to work digging into the references? I'm feeling too lazy at the moment. However deCamp's The Day of the Dinosaur is close to hand. According to deCamp the end of the Cretaceous, which is, generally, the end of the terrible lizards, too, contained no Ice Age but was a period of mild, even climate: no vast increase in cold or heat.))

Your comment on normal human respect for the law implies that people obey the law only because they fear punishment. That is not so. And your refusal to allow that electing one's legislators makes any difference in the stark picture "The law...is proclaimed by some gangster who sets himself up as King or president or dictator" leads me into the kind of periodic sentence i dislike. One ending with a short predicate like "is wrong". ((Is the law established for the benefit of the ruling class and the system or for the benefit of the people?))

It's not clear whether equating alternate world stories with fantasy means you barely consider them within our sphere of interest, or exclude them from science-fiction. ((The latter. Our sphere of interest includes both fantasy and science fiction. I would include alternate world stories on the fantasy side. By my definition fantasy = impossible while stf = possible (if, at times, highly improbable).))

Does "only shades of gray: refer to your paper, or what?((I fear my writing is becoming increasingly obtuse and my ways of thinking increasingly warped. In any event it referred to the comments I made in the paragraphs preceding the quote. The quote itself is from some Monkee music: "Today there is no wrong or right; today there is no day or night; today there is no black or white, only shades of gray." If the punctuation is incorrect blame me, not the Monkees.))

The infidel who comes on KZIA about 0750 weekdays told the story recently of a judge who reduced a man's sentence or paroled him (ordinarily not a judge's job) or something because the convict had become a good Bible Chistian, which he proved by answering the judge's Bible quiz. An answer the convict allegedly got wrong was that yes, the John of Revelation was the same as the fourt gospeler. I thought all Bible-believing Christians take them to be the same person.

I imagine that many people, when they heard there was drilling in a wilderness area, pictured a virgin forest rather than a shortgrass desert.

No doubt the laws could be improved on the subject of surface rights and mineral rights, but it's an inherently complicated subject. The true remedy would have been for the sovereign to reserve to itself at the outset all minerals and right of access thereunto, so there'd be less motive for people to complicate the law. As for why the federal government didn't send in marshals to arrest the Yates people for trespass, it could have been because there was no trespass. If the state owns the mineral rights, that ought to imply the right of access, which it granted to Yates.

Ownership of the water in a stream separate from the creek bed is probably possible only under the laws of dry western states.

((Exceedingly complicated and I bow to your superior knowledge of the law. The Yates matter is apparently settled with Yates having received their permit from the federal government and now happily drilling away for oil or gas or whatever. I dunno what became of the friends of the shortgrass or whoever they were. Did I tell you I'm giving some thought to going Green in politics?))

If you have the right to stop the building of a mile-tall arcology across the street from you, it would be what's called a negative easement. Lacking that, you'd have to depend on the village of Los Ranchos to defend you by building restrictions. I think. ((It was my impression, possibly wrong, that the legislature had passed a law to that effect a few years back in a flurry of energy conservation activity; the lawmakers wanted to encourage the use of solar energy devices. Lacking such a negative easement I think I'd rather depend on dynamite.))

Were Dr Moreau's creatures really bred up from animals in the novel, as they were in the movie? ((Are you testing my memory? Since, as you well know, Ish, I seldom take in sci-fi movies as they are, for the most part, inferior products in all respects, I cannot address myself to the method by which the filmmaker had Moreau create his creatures. In Wells' novel, however, Moreau was a vivisectionist who made "men" from beasts by means of the knife. Not very pleasantly. Which, of course, does lead one to wonder if Wells' speculation might have some bearing on modern DNA and gene-altering research. Consider Friday's statement that "My mother was a testube, my father was a knife."))

XXX

I must tell you about the big anti-nuke rally in Albuquerque which occured on June 20th last.

As you know there was a large anti-nuke rally held in NYC in 1982 and it was so much fun that another one was planned for 1983. The local kooks decided that was a good idea and they should hold one here. They would, they declared, mass the masses in front of the gates of Kirtland Air Force Base thereby preventing the employees of the base and Sandia Laboratories from going to work. Yes. They put the word out well ahead of time, of course, so that the television stations would be alerted.

(The local television stations do require a great deal of alerting. Otherwise they simply continue their umpteenth rerun of Three's Company or Happy Days while their vast news-gathering teams continue to monitor the police radio for the ultimate biggie in local news: a fatal motor vehicle crash.)

Of course the security police at the base were also alerted, made their plans accordingly to defend the base should any of the protestors manage to actually come through the gates.

As time crept along the anti-nukes got permission from Albuquerque's mayor to set up a camp ground on an abandoned city dump east of the base. Some thrity or thrity-five of them set up shelters which flapped in the thirty or thirty-five mile per hour wind.

Added complications set in. The Parent-Teachers Association was holding its national converence in Albuquerque. President Reagan had invited himself (indeed it is so) to address the conference on 15 June. What an opportunity! The anti-nukes would be able to protest for the President! Or against the President as the case may be.

The press agents announced that Ronnie baby would arrive in town on the evening of 14 June and proceed to the Hilton Inn by a "secret" route, spend the night, address the PTA the next morning, fly away to Washington.

(The "secret" to the "secret" route is how the O*F*F*I*C*I*A*L party managed to get from the airport to the hotel in the first place. Almost every street in Albuquerque is closed for repairs.)

Ronnie arrived. He went to the hotel. The protestors (estimated at 150 by the television stations, half that by the newspapers, and numbering 33 by actual count) gathered in a vacant lot across the street from the hotel for a "candlelight vigil". Unfortunately, nobody brought any candles. So it goes.

Ronnie gave his speech and left. Again by a secret route. Albuquerque motorists are still trying to find the secret route so they can get to the airport, too.

Back at the base the Air Force was putting out the word: the thirty or thirty-five camper outers were just a ruse. There were actually hundreds, yea, thousands even, of them hiding out in secret camps on the east and west mesas waiting for the 20th to show themselves.

Came the dawn of 20 June.

(The night before the anti-nukes counted their numbers, including reinforcements, found they had about 200, announced they would rally only infront of one of the base gates since they were not numerous enough to close all the gates.)

At seven o'clock the anti-nukes rallyed in front of the chosen gate. The Albuquerque cops, mounted on horseback, quickly broke up the straggly line the protestors formed across the width of the street, hauldd some 30 of them off to the calaboose. The remainder went home.

You see none of the local television stations bothered to send out camera crews. One radio station sent a hysterical girl reporter who broadcast such professional coverage as: "Oh! The army guys are getting out of their trucks." About average for the level of radio reporting in Albuquerque.

So went the great day of protest in Albuquerque.

Hell, the faggots had turned out a bigger crowd for their rally the week before.

X

"There's that slam-bang tang reminiscent of gin and vermouth." Ah, I tell you, that's the nectar of the gods.

Ha! That combination would knock the gods right on their collective asses.

Maybe so. Maybe not. Recall Thorne Smith's *The Nightlife of the Gods*. Bacchus and Mercury had just taken healthy swallows from Hunter Hawk's hip flask:

"Strange things were happening to Bacchus. He had suddenly staggered back and was now clinging to his pedestal for support. In the pale light sweat could be seen beading his forehead like jewels.

"'Zeus Almighty!' he exclaimed, looking with awe at the flask. 'What was that?'"

Mercury fared no better with his first taste of bourbon but both soon grew to develop a great fondness for it.

Yeah, well, the Olympians always were a drunken crew. Which is probably why Smith had a fondness for them.

Do you realize that in these days of inundation by what is more politely called "media freaks" there are probably thousands of alleged fans who have never heard of Thorne Smith? Or, if they have, it is only through the reruns of the old Topper tv series?

Ummm. Inasmuch as most of that crew is illiterate anyway it is too much to expect them to have read his books, don't y' know.

Probably just as well. Thorne Smith is too good for them anyway.

Right. Pass the martini shaker. Let's finish these and go do something about fish.

Something about fish? What did you have in mind?

I'm not sure. Eating fish had come to mind but there's something to be said for throwing them, too.

One must select the right target, though.

Indeed. Fat lady tourists now....

From Conversations at
Fisherman's Wharf.

X

Being, more or less, a True Believer in the pronouncements of orthodox science I generally go along with the pronouncements of prominent scientists. Sure, I do. I do not have, I will admit, the fanatical true belief of such as the well-known Dr Isaac Asimov (who would, no doubt, demand my dredentials if I were to disagree with any of his thoughts) but, nevertheless, I grew up in what has come to be termed, I suppose, a "secular humanist" background and accept that knowledge is better than faith. (I would have to admit that I am still somewhat confused as to what, exactly, "secular humanism" is supposed to be and, following the teachings of Charles Fort and John W. Campbell, Jr., I do have a tendency to look at some of science's pronouncements and say, "I doubt it.")

Chrystal and I were driving in the northern part of New Mexico, cruising somewhat slowly along one of the dirt roads which are generally shunned by the weekenders from the cities. The only other vehicle we saw was a motorcycle with California plates bouncing along the ruts. We passed into one of those familiar features of western terrain, sort of a bowl shaped valley surrounded by high mesas with bare perpendicular sides. Chrys was driving and I was gazing at the scenery when it struck me..."You know what this is," I said, "its an ancient open pit mine."

Impossible, of course, as we all know. (We do know that, I'm told.) If such were the case it would have to be several thousand years old and we all know, don't we, that the people who inhabited this region thousands of years ago--if, indeed, there were any people here thousands of years ago--were primitive savages who were completely incapable of such things as open pit mining. Particularly when the pit is several miles across. That sort of thing takes modern technology.

And so we will bow to the geologists who tell us that it is a natural feature and those bare perpendicular sides of the mesas are all due to the natural erosion of wind and water over thousands of years.

It certainly is a wonderful thing how natural erosion can make something look like an open pit mine.

H. Beam Piper, in his paratime yarns, attributed such things to more advanced "civilizations" cross-time, exploiting the various versions of Earth on which civilization was less advanced.

That's a nifty explanation, I guess, if one can accept the idea of an infinite number of universes co-existing simultaneously. But that concept is one I have difficulty swallowing. Nah, can't buy that. I have enough trouble with this universe without having an infinite number of them cluttering up the place.

Did find one of Piper's definitions of civilization amusing, though. The civilizations existing along the various continuums ranged all the way from spears to thermonuclear weapons. The type of weapon used is as good a ways as any to define civilization, I suppose.

Over the centuries the more advanced and higher civilizations have been those which found bigger and better means of killing off the opposition. No doubt when we finally completely destroy Earth and wipe out all life on the planet we shall have achieved the ultimate in civilization.

I

I took a pair of shoes in for new soles a heels a couple of weeks ago. Twenty-eight dollars and two cents it cost me. For soles and heels. Twenty-eight dollars and two cents. For two soles and two heels. I can remember when for twenty-eight dollars and two cents I could buy two pairs of shoes.

Which may be one of the problems those of us who lived during the Great Depression have. We cannot really adjust to today's prices. Can you?

I remember when Pocket Books brought out the first, ah, pocket books. The price tag was a quarter. Reading for the masses was PB's claim. A quarter. Two bits. Not too bad. Magazines cost anywhere from a dime to a quarter. Hardbacks were a buck or two.

ASF (and I don't mean ASIMOV'S) now costs $1.75 per issue. Paperbacks about $2.95 on the average. Hardbacks anywhere from...what?...fourteen bucks up? I don't know. I don't buy new hardbacks any more.

I can't adjust to these prices. Can you? I make a fair wage. Better'n some and worse'n others but I can't adjust to these prices.

Are you making what you expect to make? Do you ever expect to make what you expect to make?

A recent report I read indicated that most younger people won't. The high-paying jobs are rapidly disappearing. Low wage service jobs are taking their place. Factories are automating and the $12 per hour (or more) production jobs are going the way of the old pulp magazines. Replacing them are low-paying service jobs. Jobs that start you out at maybe four bucks an hour and top you out at five or six. Maybe five or six. Disappearing--or at least diminishing--along with the productions jobs is the great American middle class.

We are rapidly approaching the state of a lot of

relatively "poor" people, a smaller class of those who are really affluent and an even smaller group of the Middle Class. (And, of course, on top of it all are the rich.)

I tend to wander a bit. How many 3 dollar paperbacks can you really afford to buy? How many forty dollar conventions (not to mention fifty dollar hotel rooms) can you afford to attend?

Was *Return of the Jedi* worth an hour's pay?

Don't ask how I got onto this. I was writing about what it cost me for soles and heels on my shoes. Twenty-eight dollars and two cents. A suit you could buy for twenty-eight dollars and two dents. For three dollars more you got two pairs of pants.

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Hizzoner Jack Speer and two other members of New Mexicans for Space Exploration appeared on the tube at the beginning of Space Week to publicize the space effort and the programming that NMSE had planned for the week. The idea, of course, was to continue to call the public's attention to the space program (what there is of it) and work up enthusiasm for space. Later in the week former astronaut (and former Senator) Harrison "Jack" Schmitt orated his praise for the current administration's efforts in space. (it should be noted that the current administration's efforts in space are primarily military but that is better than no effort at all.)

The woman moderator of the show Juffus and company were on wanted to know all about UFOs.

Mostly, though, Space Week passed pretty much unnoticed and again I was struck by the difference in attitude towards space in the US and the USSR. Had it been a Russian who first set foot on Luna the 20th of July would be a national holiday in that country. So it goes.

The local newspapers did take note of the fact when Pioneer crossed Neptune's orbit. They duly reported that the little machine was at the edge of the galaxy (shades of Star Trek) and bound for the vast spaces between the stars and might someday enter another galaxy.

Yes.

I know that, dammit, I'm just quoting the local news idiots.

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Arthur Hlavaty reported on his attendance at the Fourth International Conference on the Fantastic which was held this past March in Boca Raton, Florida.

There were all these dreadfully serious people giving scholarly papers on fantasy and science fiction and what it all means.

It is, I tell you, a marvelous thing to think of all those scholars devoting their time to studying the old stories and writing serious papers on the philosophy of Brett Sterling or the psychological motives behind the works of Ivor Jorgensen and all that sort of thing. It does give one pause.

It also tends to give one an upset stomach.

I wonder, doesn't anyone read just for fun any more?

It is enough to drive one to drink. I should be thankful for that.

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Which is going to wind up this issue. When you get it thoroughly wound up you can release it on the wind and watch it sail away.

There will be, I am sure, another issue sometime or other. Not too far away. Need I say that contributions of written material would be appreciated?

Roy Tackett
23Jul83